

**Remarks at a Veterans Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia**  
*November 11, 2015*

Please be seated. Thank you. Thank you, Bob, for your service to our Nation as an Army Airborne Ranger and your tireless work on behalf of your fellow veterans. To Vice President Joe Biden, General Dunford; Major General Becker, distinguished guests; to our outstanding veterans service organizations and their leadership; to our men and women in uniform; and most of all, to our proud veterans and your families: It is a great privilege to be with you once again. And to Captain Florent Groberg, as Bob just mentioned, tomorrow it will be my honor to present you with the Medal of Honor, our Nation's highest military decoration.

To all our veterans here today and to veterans across America, whether you served on the beaches of Europe, the jungles of Asia, the deserts of the Middle East; whether you served here at home or overseas, in wartime or in peace; whether you served proudly in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, or Coast Guard—you are part of an unbroken chain of patriots who have served this country with honor through the life of our Nation.

On these sacred grounds, where generations of heroes have come to rest, we remember all those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our Nation. And today we gather once more to salute every patriot who has ever proudly worn the uniform of the United States of America.

This year, as we mark 70 years since our victory in the Second World War, we pay special tribute to a generation that literally saved the world. We're joined by several of those heroes, including our oldest known female World War II vet, Army Lieutenant Colonel Luta C. McGrath, who this month turns 108. *[Applause]* There she is. And I would ask all of our veterans and families of World War II, if you can stand, please stand or raise your hand so America can thank you one more time.

Today, in big cities and small towns across our country, there will be ceremonies around flagpoles and parades down Main Street to properly express our gratitude, to show our appreciation to men and women who served so that we might live free. It is right that we do so. But our tributes will ring hollow if we stop there.

If tomorrow, after the parades and the ceremonies, we roll up the banners and sweep the veterans halls and go back to our daily lives, forgetting the bond between the service of our veterans and our obligations as citizens, then we will be doing a profound disservice to our veterans and to the very cause for which they served. This day is not only about gratitude for what they have done for us, it is also a reminder of all that they still have to give to our Nation and our duty to them. And that's what I want to talk about briefly today.

We're in the midst of a new wave of American veterans. In recent years, more than a million of our men and women in uniform—many of them veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq—have completed their military service and returned to civilian life. Each year, at least another 200,000 do the same. Our 9/11 generation of veterans are joining the ranks of those who have come before, including many of you, our veterans of Korea and Vietnam.

Our tributes today will ring hollow if we do not ensure that our veterans receive the care that you have earned and that you deserve. The good news is, is that in recent years, we've made historic investments to boost the VA budget, expand benefits, offer more mental health care and improved care for our wounded warriors, especially those with posttraumatic stress

and traumatic brain injury. We've now slashed the disability claims backlog by nearly 90 percent. We're reducing the outrage of veterans' homelessness and have helped tens of thousands of our veterans get off the streets.

Still, the unacceptable problems that we've seen—like long wait times and some veterans not getting the timely care that they need—is a challenge for all of us if we are to match our words with deeds. And my message to every single veteran, to veterans all across this country is that I am still not satisfied and Bob McDonald is still not satisfied. And we are going to keep investing in the facilities and the physicians and the staff to make sure that our veterans get the care that you need when you need it. That is our obligation, and we are not going to let up.

Our tributes today will also ring hollow if we don't provide our veterans with the jobs and opportunities that you need when you come home. That's why we've helped more than 1.5 million veterans and their families pursue an education under the post-9/11 GI bill. That's why we worked to make sure that every State now provides veterans and their families with in-State tuition. It's why we're fighting to make it easier for our veterans to get the licenses and certifications to transition the outstanding skills they gained in the Armed Services to civilian jobs. It's why we're helping more veterans and military spouses find jobs. And today, the veterans' unemployment rate is down to 3.9 percent, even lower than the national average.

But this can't just be a job for government. We all have a role to play. I realize that with less than 1 percent of Americans serving in uniform, the other 99 percent of folks don't always see and appreciate the incredible skills and assets that our veterans can offer. On this Veterans Day, here's what I want every American to know: Our veterans are some of the most talented, driven, capable people on Earth.

Think about the leadership that they've learned: twenty-somethings leading platoons into life-or-death situations; the cutting-tech—edge technologies that they've mastered; their ability to adapt to changing and unpredictable situations. They can perform under pressure. They've helped reconstruct towns and mediate disputes. They've managed large-scale projects. They've learned how to work on teams, how to stay committed to a mission, how to solve seemingly intractable problems. They get stuff done. And they are selfless. And they are brave. And they are qualified. And America needs folks who know how to get stuff done.

If you can save a life on the battlefield, you can save a life in an ambulance. If you can oversee a convoy or millions of dollars of assets in a conflict zone, you sure can help manage a company's supply chain. If you can maintain the most advanced weapons in the world, surely, you can manufacture the next generation of advanced technology right here at home.

Our veterans will tell you themselves, they may have put away their uniforms, but they're not finished serving their country. And that includes our wounded warriors who tell me that as soon as they can, they want to serve their country again. They're exactly the kind of people we need to keep America competitive in the 21st century. That's why more and more companies are hiring veterans, not out of charity, not out of patriotism or some moral obligation—although, they do have those obligations—but because they know it's good for their bottom line.

Every day, our veterans help keep America strong—every day—responding to natural disasters here at home and around the world, working to end homelessness and get more of their brothers and sisters in arms the resources they need to transition into civilian life. They're starting their own businesses, like the two veterans who started a coffee shop that's so good my own staff voted to have it served in the White House. [*Laughter*] And understand, we consume

a lot of coffee in the White House. *[Laughter]* So to my sleep-deprived staff, those guys are pretty heroic. *[Laughter]*

Our veterans are moms and dads, they're teachers and doctors, engineers and entrepreneurs, social workers and community leaders. They are serving in statehouses across the country. They're serving in Congress. We've got a proud veteran, retired Navy Captain Scott Kelly, Commander of the International Space Station, who's up there right now, just became the American astronaut to serve the longest consecutive flight in space.

Our veterans are already making America great every single day. So my message today is simple: If you want to get the job done, hire a vet. If you're a business that needs team players who know how to lead and execute an idea, hire a vet. If you're a school system that needs dedicated, passionate teachers, hire a veteran. If you're a nonprofit that needs leaders who have been tested and can follow through on a vision, hire a veteran. Every sector, every industry, every community can benefit from the incredible talents of our veterans. They're ready to serve, and they'll make you proud.

I want to just give you one example: a young woman named Jennifer Madden. Jenn joined the Army at 17 years old. She wanted to be just like her grandpa, a Korean war veteran. Her very first day of basic training was September 11, 2001. She deployed to Afghanistan, where she pulled security details during attacks. She lost one of her close friends in combat. When she came home, she tried to get back into her old life, but she found she simply couldn't stay focused in school or at work. She was struggling to relate to her family and her friends. Soon, she was self-medicating and became homeless. Jenn felt like she had lost her mission, her sense of purpose.

But then, thanks to an organization that connects veterans with therapists who donate their time, Jenn was able to get counseling at no charge. She started dealing with her posttraumatic stress. With a lot of hard work, she started pulling her life back together. And today, Jenn and the love of her life, Josh, are raising two beautiful children. She is a licensed nurse. She works at a rehab facility helping folks who were just like her, including veterans, get back on their feet. And through Michelle and Jill Biden's Joining Forces initiative, she's an advocate for her fellow veterans.

Jenn is here today. And I want Jenn to stand if she can, because I want everybody to thank her for her courage, her example, for her telling her story. We are extraordinarily grateful. Thank you, Jenn.

And I tell Jenn's story because like all of our brave men and women in uniform, Jenn represents the best of who we are as a nation. She has sacrificed for us and sometimes has the scars seen and unseen that are part of that sacrifice. And she's an example of what's possible when we express our gratitude not just in words, not just on one day, but through deeds every day, when we open our hearts and give hope to our returning heroes and we harness your talents and your drive and when we honor your inherent sense of purpose and empower you to continue serving the country you love.

What has always made America great, what has always made us exceptional, are the patriots who, generation after generation, dedicate themselves to building a nation that is stronger, freer, a little more perfect. On this day and every day, we thank you.

God bless our veterans and your families. And God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. in the Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald; Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., USMC, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Maj. Gen. Bradley A. Becker, USA, commanding general, National Capital Region and Military District of Washington; and Jill T. Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

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*Locations:* Arlington, VA.

*Names:* Becker, Bradley A.; Biden, Jill T.; Biden, Joseph R., Jr.; Dunford, Joseph F., Jr.; Groberg, Florent A.; Kelly, Scott J.; Madden, Jennifer; McDonald, Robert A.; McGrath, Luta C.; Obama, Michelle.

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